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ABSTRACT

The report describes use of the Slingerland teaching approach with language handicapped students in a magnet elementary school at Chula Vista, California, and offers guidelines to school systems interested in implementing the Slingerland approach in specific magnet schools. The development of the program is briefly traced, characteristics of children with specific language disabilities described, and the Slingerland approach explained. Staff development is focused on including a 4 week all day summer school course which provides opportunities for each participant to work daily with an individual child, lectures on the approach, and time for preparation of instructional materials. Noted are the summer school program organization, costs, and the planning of summer school institutes. Also considered are methods of program evaluation, parent involvement, and public relations. The report concludes with 15 guidelines for other districts planning to implement a Slingerland program. Stressed is the need for an outstanding change agent to sell the Slingerland approach, an understanding and believing principal, and teachers willing to use a pure Slingerland strategy. (DB)

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SLINGERLAND--SLD INSTRUCTION AS A WINNING VOLUNTARY MAGNET PROGRAM

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The following is the story of a voluntary magnet program--Slingerland, which probably has no peer in popularity with parents or need with students. It is the story of a small snowball grown into a crystal mountain, and its presence is strongly felt by those touched by its charisma, but more importantly by those impacted by its program.

The Chula Vista City School District is an elementary district south of San Diego with 14,000 students, grades K-6. It is very much like the typical suburban sprawl in that it includes a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic families and business/industry enterprises. Closeness to the Mexican border, a location in sunny Southern California, and the presence of military installations add dimensions to the make-up of the community.

The District does and has had a succession of enlightened Board of Education members and a Superintendent who believes strongly in the brotherhood of man. Because of these important persons and good insights into future needs, a broad based community committee was formed in 1977 to answer the question of whether racial imbalance existed in 28 District schools. The committee-decided formula decreed that imbalance exists when a school has 15% more or less than the District minority average. It was discovered that 12 out of 28 schools were imbalanced.

In March, 1978, the committee recommended that the Board implement a voluntary magnet program to integrate schools. It was at this juncture when District staff, administration, and the integration committee were looking for effective magnet ideas that

existing Slingerland classes were "discovered."

One school, Greg Rogers, had on its staff a highly trained Slingerland teacher. She had interested five teachers on the staff in the Slingerland teaching approach, and they had participated in summer Slingerland Training Institute classes.

The result was a quiet but effective implementation of Slingerland classrooms, grades 1-6, and an even more effective dissemination of information to parents locally, regionally, and statewide that the program existed. As a result, by the time the District "recognized" that a viable Slingerland program existed, 150 students and five teachers were already deeply involved. Upon closer inspection of the program, it was discovered that there was a degree of dedication by staff and involvement by parents that could possibly move mountains, if necessary!

The Slingerland Program was recognized by the Board in July, 1978, as a magnet. However, shortly thereafter the value of the program, coupled with parental demand for entry, led the Board to declare it open to all students. Public knowledge of the existence of the program soon triggered the District to take further steps to extend the program to more students.

In June, 1979, the Board of Education approved expanding the Slingerland Program in order to accommodate a waiting list of 148 students, grades 1-6. A primary program, grades 2-3, was established at a high-minority, ten-month school, Harborside, and an upper grade program, grades 4-6, at Los Altos, a year-round, high-minority

school. Two-thirds of the slots were reserved for nonminority students and one-third for students at the home school.

In June, 1980, a first Slingerland Program was added at Harborside, and in September, 1980, a second fourth grade at Rogers. Presently, 338 students are bussed from throughout 28 elementary schools to the three Slingerland Centers. A waiting list of approximately 100 students wanting to be screened or admitted to the program exists. The waiting list is sectioned off by grade level and ethnicity so that available slots at Rogers, a high-white school, or Harborside and Los Altos, high non-white schools, may be filled according to the District transfer policy.

The transfer policy affects all student movement, magnet or otherwise, by stating that a student's acceptance at a school must enhance racial balance. Transfers are approved by a single person--the Assistant Superintendent of Administration, who also administers the total integration program--to guarantee consistency in decisions impacting student transfers/integration.

Parents of graduating Slingerland sixth grade students expressed concern that no program existed in the secondary district, which is separate from the elementary district. Through articulation with the District administrators and staff, and the dedication of the elementary District Slingerland advisor, Nancy Royal, a seventh grade program was established in 1979 at a high-minority junior high, Granger. It has been a highly successful voluntary magnet for the secondary district. Eighteen sixth graders were enrolled immediately

and in 1980, 50 students, grades 7 and 8, are attending Granger. Classes are now full and a waiting list exists.

In 1979, an 11th grade class was begun at Chula Vista High School and expanded to 10th, 11th, and 12th. In 1980, two classes are at Montgomery Junior High. In addition, teachers in regular education, special education, and/or reading specialists are now using the Slingerland approach in four other junior high schools and two more high schools in the Sweetwater Union High School District. In addition, classes have been opened in other districts throughout the county. Now, approximately 4,400 San Diego County children are being taught by teachers trained in Slingerland training sessions.

Student Population

In every classroom, in every school throughout the world, there are children who are having difficulty learning the basic language skills of reading, writing, spelling, and verbalizing their thoughts, even though others of less ability may be able to learn very well in that situation. This sizable segment of children are referred to as having specific language disability, developmental dyslexia, or a language learning difference. These are bright children, not mentally deficient, not brain damaged. They do not have primary emotional problems, although an estimated two-thirds may develop some degree of disturbance due to the frustration of failure. Motivation is not their basic problem; it is only after they have tried and failed that they give up. Unfortunately, this awareness of failure and resignation can occur at a very early age (Slingerland, 1969-1980).

There are many degrees of disability, the effects of which depend on temperament, management of failure, environment, intelligence, and the understanding received at home and school. The estimated incidence of specific language disability (SLD) ranges from 5-30%, depending on the degree of severity and definition accepted by the researcher. Drake D. Duane (1974), Consultant in Neurology, Mayo Clinic and Mayo Medical School, stated: "Figures range from 5-15% of the school-age population. Even if one accepts the lower figure of 5% demonstrating SLD, this would mean that reading retardation constitutes a greater health problem than the combined occurrence of mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and epilepsy."

In SLD children, there is a weakness in auditory (sound), visual (sight), or kinesthetic (automatic memory and feel of sequential movements) functions or in the integration between these sensory modalities which deal with language. (This prevents their learning the language skills when taught in the conventional manner.) Some of the most common characteristics are:

- persistence in reading errors (omissions, substitutions, lack of phrasing, concept missed in struggle with mechanics).
- persistence in spelling errors.
- difficulty in visual perception and memory: letter and word recognition, reversals, and transpositions (b-d, girl-gril).
- delay in language acquisition.
- difficulty in auditory processing, listening, sequencing, remembering what is heard, following directions, and self-expression.

- directional confusion in time and space.
- labored and/or illegible handwriting.
- disorganization and lack of structure in oral and/or written language.
- sequencing problems in oral language. (Slingerland, 1978(b))

Most authorities have come to believe there is often a genetic background or family pattern closely associated with SLD. However, sometimes it occurs in isolated cases. We have learned that the eyes and ears carry data or signals over modalities of input to the cortex of the brain. There integration takes place with its coding, encoding, recognition, and countless associations with past stimuli. All of this must be tied to intelligence before memory and the motor patterns can be recalled and carried over modalities of output and into use. When there is disorganization in any of these steps, the sequence of symbol and sound which make words that convey concept is disordered. Language disability is the result. It is because of this difficulty, for whatever reason, to perceive words as wholes and to make automatic auditory-visual-kinesthetic associations that we know our teaching techniques for these children must deviate from the conventional methods that assume all children can learn by configuration (Slingerland, 1969-1980).

The Slingerland Adaptation of Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Approach has been found to be effective in instructing the SLD student. Because it is an approach, rather than a method or technique, it allows the teacher to provide for individual differences within students. Basic principles of the Slingerland approach are:

1. Simultaneous multisensory presentation in which the students' strongest modalities are always used to reinforce integration and strengthen the weaker modalities.
2. Always teaching through the intellect . . . never rote learning.
3. Beginning with a single unit (whether it be of sight, sound or thought) and building to the more complex.
4. Insuring a successful performance by the student through the structuring of learning experiences in a positive environment.

This is a total language approach involving all areas of language. SLD children have difficulty in the association and generalization of information. Teaching isolated fragments of language skills without these skills being linked together in a total approach is not satisfactory for the student with disorganized language patterns. Use of the intellect is stressed. SLD students must consciously "think through" processes which may be quite automatic for the non-SLD child (Slingerland, 1978).

The Slingerland approach should not be thought of as a phonetic program; however, phonics are used in a multisensory presentation as a component of the approach. This is a success-oriented program in which the teacher assumes responsibility for the appropriateness of the level of the task, provides needed preinstruction, and gives necessary guidance to assure the student's success and opportunities for practice in carrying skills to functional use. For this to be

possible, the teacher must be well-aware of the student's individual needs, abilities, and the structure of the language learning processes.

Instruction begins with many oral language experiences (Slingerland, 1967). Children are given guidance in organizing this language. Formalized instruction is initiated with training in the kinesthetic modality to develop the automatic sequential movements necessary for forming letters.

As soon as the sequential movements to form letters become automatic, the sound is associated. When this integration is achieved, the next step is to carry the phoneme-grapheme integration to functional use in blending a word, adding suffixes and prefixes, spelling nonphonetic words, writing phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and papers. The goal is independent propositional and creative writing.

While instruction is being conducted from the kinesthetic and auditory stimuli, it is also being done from a visual stimulus, always being sure to integrate and reinforce with the other two modalities. Only when the children have become automatic in their ability to blend sounds are they ready to begin decoding. It should be remembered that decoding is simply a crutch, a recognition of words. It is not reading until concept is involved.

Reading from books is begun at the same time as in other classrooms. Special or phonetic books are not used; thus, teachers are free to choose from the books ordinarily used in the school.

A special four-step preparation for reading to teach vocabulary precedes reading from a book. These steps are:

1. Visual and auditory stimulus: kinesthetic linkage.
2. Auditory stimulus: visual and kinesthetic linkage.
3. Auditory concept stimulus: visual and kinesthetic linkage.
4. Visual stimulus: kinesthetic and auditory linkage.

When reading from a book, the child's attention is focused on concept by breaking sentences down to meaningful phrases. Understanding of sentence and paragraph organization is acquired and becomes a useful conceptual tool for building more sophisticated comprehension. Each day's lesson is structured to: (a) build concept, (b) lengthen eye-span, (c) make functional use of word attack skills, (d) develop recognition of phrases, (e) develop study skills, (f) project thought, and (g) build cognitive skills. The goal, of course, is successful independent reading--reading with comprehension.

Staff Development

In Chula Vista, each Slingerland class has a teacher and a three-hour aide. It is critical that teachers and aides be carefully in-serviced. Therefore, a prerequisite to establishing an effective program is staff development. This includes careful selection of personnel, specialized preservice educational training programs, and ongoing in-service support services. A thorough understanding of the characteristics of the problem, a knowledge of theories upon which remediation techniques are based, and experience

in applying these to meet individual differences are all necessary for success in teaching the SLD child.

The Slingerland course covers a four-week period of intensive study, meeting five days a week, from 8:30-3:00. The intent of the course is to offer instruction in the etiology, to diagnose specific language disability (sometimes known as developmental dyslexia), and to provide training in techniques designed to provide a preventive and/or remedial program for students in regular education classrooms. These techniques were developed by Mrs. Beth H. Slingerland as a classroom use adaptation of the multisensory approach based on theories of Dr. Samuel T. Orton, Anna Gillingham, and Bessie Stillman. All courses are sponsored by school districts in cooperation with colleges and universities.

Course Content

Each day is organized to include the following activities (Slingerland, 1978):

1. Demonstration with SLD children grouped in classroom situations and taught by staff teachers.
2. Opportunity for each participant to work daily with an individual child and gain experience in use of the techniques under staff guidance.
3. Lectures on the neurophysiological background for understanding the children, language development, specific language disability, phonics, and multisensory techniques.
4. Time for preparation of materials for future use by participants.

5. Guidance in making daily plans for use of instructional techniques with individual children, but applicable to group instruction.
6. Opportunities for student and teacher interaction on individual basis, in groups, and in total group situations. Activities include oral language, reading, writing, spelling, literature, music, and physical education.

Summer School Organization

Responsibilities are shared and reinforced by the various staff members. The staff includes:

1. Director-Lecturer: This is the school administrator and the university approved instructor. He/she is responsible for lectures, schedules, guidance, in-service and evaluation of staff teachers. The director teaches demonstration lessons in the various staff rooms on a rotating basis. He/she also supervises and guides individual students. The director leads the daily assemblies held for students and teachers.
2. Staff Teacher: Teacher-participants are divided into groups of 15 which are assigned to an individual staff teacher. This staff teacher demonstrates teaching techniques with a class of children on a daily basis. The staff teacher also meets with teachers twice daily for discussion and lesson planning classes. Staff teachers critique lesson plans daily, observe tutorial sessions, and give guidance to the participant teachers.

3. Support Staff: A minimum of four hours per day clerical time is needed when teacher-participants exceed 45. Minimal custodial service is needed.
4. Facilities: An average of five classrooms per staff teacher (15 teacher-participants) is needed to afford one demonstration room and 15 teaching stations for individual tutoring. Also needed are restroom, lunchroom facilities, office space with access to telephones, and playground space to allow for physical education classes.
5. Materials: The Slingerland course uses many materials found in schools. The principle materials needed for work with children include newsprint, pencils, and well-written basal readers. Teachers may make or purchase materials that they will use in their teaching, both in the school and back in their home rooms. (The 1980 purchase price was approximately $70.)

Costs for Summer School

The costs for setting up a summer school varies according to costs in various areas of the country. Basically, it includes staff salaries, minimal supply costs for children's materials, printing costs (approximately $80 per 65 teacher-participant group), any building use fees, and a teacher-participant service charge to Slingerland Institute for staff in-service, materials, processing, etc.

Fees for university credit vary with the university. These

charges and teacher's materials charges are usually paid for by the teacher-participants. Some areas are allowed to charge a minimal tuition fee (student) which defrays district costs while providing low-cost tutorial service (range $20-$65).

Planning Summer Schools

All summer schools are planned through:

Slingerland Institute
23600 Marine View Drive
Seattle, WA 98188

Summer schools are only held in districts which have administrative support for teachers interested in this instruction. (Teachers from other districts are welcome to participate if there are openings.) Participants must be credentialed teachers. Two years of classroom experience is recommended. All classes offer graduate level credit which is arranged either through the district or Slingerland Institute.

Staff members have received several years of continuing education, both in the use of Slingerland techniques and in the area of teacher education. Every staff member is personally approved to instruct in the Slingerland Summer Schools by the Slingerland Institute. Persons who have not met these stringent training requirements should not represent themselves as Slingerland Teacher Education Instructors.

Evaluation

Program evaluation must begin at the earliest meaningful point

and it must be continuous. Evaluation is not simply an accumulation of achievement test scores. On the contrary, a wide variety of factors must be considered.

Teachers of SLD children have found that remediation is not achieved in a short time. Beth Slingerland (1978) and others have suggested that in most cases achievement is difficult to assess before the end of the second year in the program or before the student has begun to integrate and carry learning to functional use. Even at that time, the characteristics of the disability may influence results.

With the need for early and continuous evaluation in mind, and well aware of the difficulties involved, staff have attempted to assess both academic and affective facets of the program by the use of the following instruments and procedures.

I. Rosebank Management System (Title IV-C Dissemination-Chula Vista, CA)

II. Morrison McCall Spelling Tests

III. Stanford Achievement Tests

IV. Criterion Reference Tests in Handwriting

V. Slingerland Four-Way Alphabet

VI. Behavior and Emotional Checklist (subjective, pre-post by teacher)

VII. Opinion Surveys

Psychologist

A. Parent Interviews

District Research/Evaluation

A. Parent Interviews

B. Student Interviews

C. Teacher Interviews

Parent Involvement

Parents are and have been an influential force in the development of our program. Rather than developing a separate power base, they have become involved with the welfare of the total school district. Many serve as leaders in the PTA, both at local and district council levels. Others serve on School Site Councils, District Advisory Committees, and on the school board. Their unwavering commitment has enabled the Slingerland classes to progress from the status of "special projects" to a component of the "general educational program" in Chula Vista City Schools.

Parents and community are involved in this program through:

- Individual parent conferences with program coordinator at time of entry into program.
- Individual periodic parent-teacher conferences.
- Parent-group informational meetings with program coordinator, classroom teacher and resource personnel.
- Parent discussion groups with the site school psychologist.
- Individual counseling with psychologist and/or counselor when need is indicated.
- Volunteer aides working with children in the classrooms, school library, office, etc.

- Membership in advisory committees, both at local school and district level.
- Visitations to the program and/or presentations by program coordinator to community service groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, PTA, PSTA (secondary), CANAC, and the Orton Society.

Public Relations

Public relations entered the program in several ways. Most important was the process of neighbor talking to neighbor. The Slingerland resource teacher had previously been involved in teacher-education. This continued with her teaching classes, serving as guest lecturer, and speaking at conferences. Community organizations began requesting presentations.

The news media became interested and printed four major news stores (½ page or more). One of these was published widely resulting in communication coming from throughout the United States, Singapore, and Guatemala.

Two television channels have covered the program in their newscasts. The Slingerland resource teacher has also been interviewed on the local television talk show "Sun Up." One magazine article has been completed and another is presently in the process of being written.

All of these activities have raised the community's consciousness level, and with the recognition has come a host of requests for HELP!

Summary

It is assumed in this article that each school district has a dynamic superintendent or at least an objective person who is willing to allow "some leader" to move forward. It is also assumed that each district has a Board of Education that will listen and act in the best interest of children. Even if your district does not have these assets, it is recommended that the following model be considered as part of a plan to implement a Slingerland Program in your district.

1. Be prepared to present to the Superintendent or his/her designee an accurate picture of Slinderland. Take out the mystery of it and replace it with vivid descriptions of the strategy, materials, and types of students who benefit. Have with you articles, materials, and testimony in the form of another school district superintendent or "significant person," parent group, or, best of all, a school board member. Suggest places to visit that are nearby and inexpensive to visit or bring in a person to discuss the program with key persons in curriculum, principals, etc.
2. When sufficient interest is shown, it is important to prepare a presentation for board review. Include in the presentation an actual demonstration of the technique. Remember, the mystery must be removed for everyone's understanding and support. Include budget costs.
3. Make sure there is full support from the administration

before proceeding. Request a written memo of support or back-up data.

4. Draw up a budget and detailed program outline. Present to interested teachers and principals. Be sure that everyone understands Slingerland as an approach and not as a curriculum or package.
5. Outline teacher training opportunities. Try to offer this to teachers without charge with the exception of materials. (Many teachers want to make their own.)
6. Be sure the training is top-notch. Bring in the best consultants available.
7. Establish a corps of teachers in a single school. Avoid placing a single teacher to implement a Slingerland program in a school. Have at least a first-third or fourth-sixth program. Teachers need support and encouragement from each other. Clusters permit better supervision and support services.
8. Notify parents of the availability of the program by having at least two meetings, one daytime and one evening. Have parents sign up for screening and testing. Continue parent information meetings.
9. Send sign-up sheets to the school of attendance for principals/psychologist input. A "success committee" in each school helps.
10. Test and screen students. Only one person in a district

should have testing/screening rights to insure proper and consistent identification of eligible students.

11. Implement program, monitor closely, and place program in schools where the principal will be understanding and support teachers. He/she must be able to justify lower class size for Slingerland teachers to their colleagues.
12. Monitor transportation of Slingerland students. A bus aide may be needed to quell fears for students new to riding a bus and to serve as adult supervision.
13. In-service bus drivers.
14. In-service substitutes.
15. In-service aides.

THIS RECIPE FOR IMPLEMENTATION MUST INCLUDE AN OUTSTANDING CHANGE AGENT TO SELL SLINGERLAND, ONE UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEVING PRINCIPAL, AND TEACHERS WILLING TO USE A PURE SLINGERLAND STRATEGY. If mixed properly, the result will be a wonderful program designed to assist students with specific language disability. Parental support will come fast and furious, and in no time at all a successful program which meets the needs of children will be on the all-time great list. If used as a magnet program it will undoubtedly attract students and serve as a valuable link in successfully integrating schools.

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